



**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**Office of Information**  
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**EUROPEAN STARLING RAPIDLY SPREADING  
WESTWARD--HAS BENEFICIAL FOOD HABITS**

The European starling, the alien bird that has spread from importations planted in Central Park, New York City, nearly forty years ago, to most of the States east of the Mississippi, is rapidly spreading westward as a breeding species and is likely ultimately to be found throughout most of the area from southern Canada to the Gulf coast and westward to the Rocky Mountains, according to the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture. Farmers' Bulletin 1571-P, "The European Starling in the United States," just issued by the department, sets forth the economic status of this bird according to results of the survey's studies, and Circular 40-C, "The Spread of the European Starling in North America (to 1928)," also just published, traces the history of the bird's extension of range, describes its methods of spread, and predicts probable future extensions. The spread of the starling is also summarized in the Farmers' Bulletin.

An intensive study by the department of the starling's food habits was based chiefly on the examination of the contents of more than 2,600 stomachs of starlings, a greater number than that used for similar studies of any other bird that have been published so far. This investigation led to the conclusion that most of the starling's habits are either beneficial to man or of an economically neutral character. Field observation has established the fact that the time spent by starlings in destroying crops, such as cherries, apples, and

sweet-corn, or in molesting other species of birds, is extremely short compared with the hours they spend searching for insects or feeding on wild fruits. It is pointed out that as a destroyer of the clover-leaf weevil, the Japanese beetle, May beetles, cutworms, and grasshoppers--some of the farmer's worst pests--it is even more energetic than many of our protected native birds.

In spite of the fact that starlings in normal numbers exert an influence for good and may well be left unmolested when not inflicting noticeable damage, there are times and circumstances, say the investigators, under which they may become objectionable. To the city dweller, they say, the most conspicuous habit of the bird is its establishment of obnoxious winter roosts, which in eastern cities are sometimes of enormous size. Typical of such gatherings is the one that for years has occupied the trees and buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue and other down-town streets in Washington, D. C. In spite of measures taken to drive them away, the birds have persisted and return year after year to the historic thoroughfare of the National Capital. Methods used for eradicating starling roosts are given in the new Farmers' Bulletin, although, it is stated, no method at present in use assures lasting success, for if vigilance is not employed temporary eradication may be followed by re-establishment of the roost.

There is no doubt, according to the department, that there are local areas in which the starling is detrimental to agriculture and horticulture at the present time, but the factor of overabundance rather than pronounced tendencies for harm on the part of the individual bird has brought this about. There is no question, in view of its highly insectivorous food habits, it is concluded, that the influence of the European starling, in moderate numbers, in the United States is beneficial.

Copies of Farmers' Bulletin 1571-F on the economic status of the starling may be had free, as long as the supply lasts, on request addressed to the Office of Information, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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